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S/S :JMEALUM

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TO AMEMBASSY TOKYO IMMEDIATE

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TOSEC 103

E.O. 11652: GDS NO FOREIGN DISSEM

TAGS: TU, PINT

SUBJECT: INR ASSESSMENT OF PROSPECTS FOR NEW TURKISH
GOVERNMENT

1. THE IRMAK CABINET, ANNOUNCED NOVEMBER 17, CONSISTS OF
TECHNOCRATS AND NONENTITIES. IRMAK HIMSELF IS NOT WIDELY
KNOWN. RECENTLY RETURNED TO POLITICAL LIFE AFTER 25 YEARS
AS A PRACTICING PHYSICIAN AND PROFESSOR, HE REMAINS A
THROWBACK TO AN EARLIER ERA. HIS MAIN ORIENTATION IS TO
THE PRINCIPLES OF ATATURK, WHICH INCLUDE GOVERNMENT BY THE
ELITE, POPULISM AT HOME, AND COMPOSING DIFFERENCES WITH
NEIGHBORS ABROAD.

2. THE IRMAK GOVERNMENT LACKS STRONG PERSONALITIES AND A
PARTY COMPLEXION. INDEED, NONE OF THE MAJOR PARTIES WANTS
CLOSE IDENTIFICATION WITH IT. THE REPUBLICAN PEOPLE'S
PARTY (RPP) AND THE JUSTICE PARTY (JP) BOTH REJECTED THE
IDEA OF A NATIONAL COALITION. NEITHER PARTY WANTS
RESPONSIBILITY FOR SOLVING TURKEY'S PRESSING PROBLEMS AT

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THIS JUNCTURE. WITH THEIR EYES ON FUTURE POLITICKING,

BOTH WANT FREEDOM TO CRITICIZE THE NEW GOVERNMENT'S INEVITABLE FAILURES.

3. ON BALANCE, HOWEVER, WE BELIEVE THAT THE IRMAK GOVERNMENT IS LIKELY TO GAIN A VOTE OF CONFIDENCE IN PARLIAMENT, ALTHOUGH THIS OUTCOME IS NOT ASSURED. NEITHER

THE RPP NOR THE JP IS ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT IRMAK, AND NEITHER HAS YET COMMITTED ITSELF TO SUPPORTING HIM. IN THE END, HOWEVER, BOTH PARTIES ARE LIKELY TO VOTE TO ESTABLISH THE GOVERNMENT PRINCIPALLY TO AVOID BLAME FOR FRUSTRATING A GOVERNMENT OF LAST RESORT. EXCEPT FOR THE NATIONAL SALVATION PARTY, WHICH IS BECOMING THE ODD-MAN-OUT OF TURKISH POLITICS, THE OTHER MINOR PARTIES, SOME OF WHICH HAVE SUPPLIED MINISTERS, ARE GENERALLY COMMITTED TO IRMAK.

4. EVEN A LARGE VOTE OF CONFIDENCE WILL NOT GIVE THE IRMAK GOVERNMENT A STRONG PARLIAMENTARY BASE FOR DECISIVE ACTION. IT WOULD NOT SIGNIFY THE OTHER PARTIES' COMMITMENT TO SUPPORT PROGRAMS, POLICIES, OR APPROACHES.

5. THE IRMAK GOVERNMENT IS VIEWED BY THE POLITICIANS AS A TEMPORIZING DEVICE DESIGNED TO ALLOW TURKEY ORDERLY PROCESSES OF GOVERNMENT UNTIL ELECTIONS ARE HELD SOME MONTHS HENCE.

--(A) AS A LARGELY NONPARTISAN GOVERNMENT, IT WILL HAVE CONSIDERABLE FREEDOM TO ACT, BUT ONLY IN AREAS ON WHICH PARLIAMENTARY BACKING IS NOT REQUIRED. FOR EXAMPLE, IT CAN BE UNINHIBITED IN THE STYLE OF NEGOTIATIONS, BUT IT WILL BE VERY LIMITED IN THE SUBSTANCE OF WHAT IT CAN OFFER.

--(B) AS A GOVERNMENT OF TECHNICIANS, IT IS UNLIKELY TO TAKE BOLD STEPS EVEN WHEN IT IS FREE TO ACT. LACKING THE PROSPECT OF CONTINUITY WITH ITS EVENTUAL SUCCESSOR, IT WILL PROBABLY NOT INITIATE LONG-RANGE PROGRAMS OF ANY SORT, DESPITE THE GENERAL EXPECTATION THAT IT WILL DEAL RIGOROUSLY WITH INFLATION.

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6. THE IRMAK GOVERNMENT WILL AT BEST FACE AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE. ITS FORMATION HAS NOT CHANGED THE BASIC PROBLEMS OF TURKISH POLITICS:

--(A) IT CAMOUFLAGES THE INABILITY OF THE PARTIES TO PULL TOGETHER, BUT IT DOES NOT GUARANTEE EVEN THEIR PRESENT, LET ALONE THEIR FUTURE COOPERATION.

--(B) IT DOES NOT SATISFY THE DEMAND FOR STRONG LEADERSHIP (A SECOND ATATURK) NOW FELT MORE THAN EVER AFTER THREE YEARS OF WEAK AND UNSTABLE GOVERNMENTS.

--(C) IT DOES NOT PROVIDE A FRAMEWORK FOR INSTITUTIONAL CHANGES IN THE OPERATION OF PARLIAMENT AND THE ELECTORAL LAW TO PREVENT THE RECURRENCE OF POLITICAL STALEMATE AND

THE FRAGMENTATION OF THE POLITICAL ARENA.

7. THE IRMAK GOVERNMENT HAS TWO IMMEDIATE PROBLEMS: ELECTIONS AND CYPRUS.

8. THE QUESTION OF THE TIMING OF ELECTIONS HAS BEEN A MATTER OF BITTER CONTROVERSY SINCE THE RESIGNATION OF THE ECEVIT CABINET IN SEPTEMBER. PARLIAMENT--NOT THE PRESIDENT OR THE PRIME MINISTER--HAS THE AUTHORITY TO SET THE DATE IN ADVANCE OF THE END OF THE NORMAL TERM IN OCTOBER 1977. ONLY THE RPP BELIEVES IT ADVANTAGEOUS TO HOLD ELECTIONS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE BEFORE THE POPULARITY GENERATED BY ITS HANDLING OF THE CYPRUS INTERVENTION FADES. PRESSURES FROM THE RPP TO SET AN EARLY DATE COULD TRIGGER RENEWED CRISIS AT ANY TIME, THOUGH ECEVIT PROBABLY WILL BE WILLING TO DEFER THIS ISSUE UNTIL AFTER THE BUDGET DEBATE IN FEBRUARY. THE OTHER PARTIES APPEAR AGREEABLE TO ELECTIONS IN THE FALL OF 1975, BUT THEIR POSITIONS WILL BE BASED ON CONTINUING ASSESSMENTS OF THEIR ELECTORAL CHANCES.

9. CYPRUS IS THE SECOND MAJOR ISSUE FACING THE GOVERNMENT. TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH THE GREEKS, IRMAK MIGHT BE INCLINED TO COMPROMISE TO RESOLVE THIS ISSUE. BUT HE
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CANNOT GO FAR WITHOUT PARLIAMENTARY BACKING.

10. FOR TURKISH POLITICIANS, FREEZING THE PRESENT STATUS ON THE ISLAND--WITH CONTINUING MOVEMENT OF TURKISH CYPRIOTS FROM THE SOUTH INTO THE TURKISH-CONTROLLED AREA IN THE NORTH--IS THE MOST COMFORTABLE POSITION.

--(A) WITH CYPRUS AS A MAJOR CAMPAIGN ISSUE IN THE COMING ELECTIONS, IT WOULD BE POLITICAL SUICIDE TO AGREE TO GIVE UP ANY OF THE GAINS WON ON THE ISLAND BY FORCE OF ARMS.

--(B) THE IMPENDING RETURN OF MAKARIOS REINFORCES THE INCLINATION IN TURKEY TO GO SLOW IN DEALING WITH THE GREEKS.

--(C) TURKISH POLITICIANS ARE STILL CONFIDENT THAT SECRETARY KISSINGER CAN OVERCOME THE CONGRESSIONAL DEADLINE OF DECEMBER 10 FOR PROGRESS TOWARD SETTling THE CYPRUS DISPUTE WITHOUT ANY ACTION BY TURKEY.

--(D) MANY TURKS PROBABLY READ THE SWEEPING KARAMANLIS VICTORY IN GREECE AS AN ENCOURAGING SIGN, THEREBY REDUCING THE NEED FOR TURKISH CONCESSIONS IN ORDER TO GET NEGOTIATIONS STARTED.

11. IN THIS SITUATION, IRMAK IS UNLIKELY TO FEEL ABLE TO OFFER MUCH IN THE WAY OF GESTURES TO BRING THE GREEKS TO THE NEGOTIATING TABLE. IF HE SHOULD OFFER CONCESSIONS WHICH SEEMED SUFFICIENT TO MEET GREEK REQUIREMENTS, IT IS QUESTIONABLE THAT PARLIAMENT WOULD BACK HIM OR ALLOW HIM TO COMMIT TURKEY OVER THE LONGER RUN.

12. THE TURKISH MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT PROBABLY WOULD NOT GIVE IRMAK STRONG SUPPORT IN BRINGING CIVILIAN POLITICIANS INTO LINE. WHILE THE MILITARY LEADERSHIP IS CONCERNED OVER THE POSSIBILITY OF A CUT-OFF IN US AID, THE OFFICERS CONTINUE TO HOPE THAT THE US WILL BE ABLE TO AVOID SUCH DRASTIC ACTION. MOREOVER, THERE IS LITTLE SENTIMENT FOR BACKING DOWN ON AN INTENSELY NATIONALISTIC ISSUE SUCH AS CYPRUS. FINALLY, THE MILITARY HAS RECENTLY SHOWN LITTLE STOMACH FOR ACTIVE INTERVENTION IN POLITICS
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EVEN DURING PROLONGED PERIODS OF POLITICAL DRIFT AND IMPASSE.

13. THE US HAS BEEN ENJOYING AN ERA OF PARTICULAR FAVOR WITH THE TURKISH PUBLIC IN THE MONTHS SINCE THE TURKISH INTERVENTION ON CYPRUS. TURKISH POLITICIANS CREDIT WASHINGTON WITH TILTING IN FAVOR OF ANKARA. WHILE THIS EUPHORIA MAKES IT DIFFICULT FOR THE TURKISH GOVERNMENT TO TAKE THE CONGRESSIONAL DEADLINE SERIOUSLY, IT ALSO DISPOSES THE TURKS TO EXPECT THAT EVEN IF AID WERE CUT, THE SUSPENSION WOULD NOT LAST LONG.

14. THE NEW FOREIGN MINISTER, MELIH ESENBEL, COMES TO HIS POST FROM NINE YEARS IN WASHINGTON. HIS PREDECESSOR, TURAN GUNES, HAD BEEN THREATENING TO REEXAMINE THE QUESTION OF US FACILITIES IN TURKEY IF AID WERE SUSPENDED. ESENBEL IS LIKELY TO FOLLOW A MORE MEASURED APPROACH. DEEPLY COMMITTED TO US TIES, ESENBEL WILL NO DOUBT WORK TO MAINTAIN AN EFFECTIVE LOW-KEY RELATIONSHIP AND TO AVOID AROUSING TURKISH OPINION AGAINST US FACILITIES. ON THE OTHER HAND, ESENBEL MAY NOT SWING MUCH WEIGHT IN PARLIAMENT, AND HENCE HIS UNDERSTANDING OF US OBJECTIVES MAY

NOT BE TRANSLATED INTO EFFECTIVE ACTION BY THE GOVERNMENT
IN RESOLVING THE CYPRUS DISPUTE. INGERSOLL

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